



The 5th Konko International Gathering

The 5th Konko International Gathering was held on November 14-15, 2019, at Konkokyo's Sacred Grounds (*Goreichi*). This was a very special commemorate year, celebrating the 160th Anniversary of Konkokyo's Establishment with approximately 140 believers from 6 different regions joining - Canada and mainland USA, Hawaii, South America, South Korea, Australia and Japan.

Following the opening prayer service at the Main Worship Hall (MWH), participants took part in Sacred Mediation with our Spiritual Leader, Konko-Sama. He gave the following message: "I am grateful that you will hold the 5th Konko International Gathering at this very place where Kami revealed 'The Way' to our Founder, on this very day. We can live 'The Way of Kami and People,' which our Founder opened up to the world. I wholeheartedly pray that everyone work together for world peace and salvation of humanity, the wish since The Way was born."

Afterwards, the "Discover *Goreichi* Tour" began at the Founder's Original Mediation Hall (*Rikkyo Seijo*). Everyone listened to the story about this very place that our Founder received "The Divine Call" (*Rikkyo Shinden*) from Kami-Sama 160 years ago, as well as how he devoted himself to serving at Sacred Mediation until he passed away on October 10, 1883.

We all then moved on to the Faith Training Hall (*Shutokuden*), and received a lecture about our current (5th Generation Spiritual Leader) "Konko-Sama" by his second son, Reverend Kiyoji Konko.

In the evening, the dinner party organized by the Konko Churches of North America (KCNA) was held at Yatsunami Hall. About 180 people attended and everyone had a joyful

time together. During the party, they enjoyed the wonderful speeches by ministers from South Korea and Brazil, a hula dance and singing by folks from the Konko Missions of Hawaii, and a special band performance by ministers from Japan, as well. Also, there was a slideshow presentation by KCNA dedicated to our Founder, expressing appreciation for his 160 years of Sacred Mediation and how his Sacred Mediation has spread throughout North America through the various churches and propagation halls. The party ended with the singing of Konkokyo Songs joined by all.

The next morning, at 3:40 am, the participants reverently greeted Konko-Sama's procession to the MWH, attended the morning prayer service and a prayer at the Founder's gravesite. Afterwards, everyone took part in sacred cleaning around the Founder's Original Mediation Hall.

Following breakfast, a faith enrichment workshop was held. Everyone shared their individual faith experiences, and each person wrote their personal wish for the year.

From 10 am, the Konkokyo Establishment Day Service was held at the MWH. The service was conducted solemnly with worshippers from all over the world.

As the Gathering began to wind down, the participants held a ceremony in the front court yard of the MWH and concluded with a rousing cheer and affirmation of the theme, "Back to the Day: Inspiring the Future!"

Several participants' comments were: "I could feel special virtue at *Goreichi*." "I was so happy to be here and to see everyone from other countries on this special occasion." "I really enjoyed the faith enrichment workshop. We were able to share our experiences and contemplate our own faith." "I'm so grateful to live this Way of Faith with all of you."

Messages from the participants of the Gathering

During this Gathering, I was overwhelmed that someone as “prestigious” as Reverend Kiyoji Konko was so willing to share his most intimate feelings in his letter to his father, the 5th Konko-Sama. His thoughtful responses to the followers’ questions made me comfortable about the religion’s principles that encourage non-dogmatic dialogue and debate. His statement that if one says he is praying sincerely, he is most likely not, resonated with me. I heard him say this is a faith of never-ending practice that permeates both the intellect and the heart, where Kami takes residence in each individual’s heart and spirit.

Reverend Hiromichi Konko’s rock band performance heightened my appreciation. Was this the same man at the Sacred Mediation place? The person who was potentially the next Konko-Sama was NOT an idol or so remote that ordinary humans could never hope to attain his spiritual stature. As he and Ikigami Konko Daijin created a prism to Kami, I expressed my gratitude for this pilgrimage.



Ms. Denise Teraoka, Konko Church of San Francisco, U.S.A.

Morning Reflection

The sound of silence,

Sitting in the worship hall.

Four o’clock morning energy.

Some sitting seiza, with foreheads on the tatami floor.

Breathing in the fresh tatami reed, nature’s breath.

Eyes closed.

Some watching, waiting,

Warding off sleepiness,

Praying, thinking of this and that,

Wondering about the stories of those here,

Being moved, inspired, by the early morning quiet fervor.

Finally, feeling the breath, focusing on the place

And what brought one to this place, sitting there,

Finding comfort.

Giving thanks for the many this and that,

For the daily blessings,

Grateful for the guidance of gentle spirits,

Our virtue.

The sound of silence.

Broken by a child’s voice, happy bell like sounds,

maybe a whiny complaint, a muffled cough,

A soft bell, followed by a gentle rustle of bodies

adjusting sitting positions.

Four claps as one.

The drone, the cadence of the

prayers,

One voice.

At a place called Goreichi,

The source of Virtue.



Ms. Karen Taniguchi,
Konko Mission of Waipahu, Hawaii

How wonderful it is that Konkokyo ministers and believers from around the world came together at our Sacred Grounds (*Goreichi*) on this occasion! I am so grateful that we were able to have an opportunity to honor our Spiritual Leader, Konko-Sama and to learn about and develop our faith together.

Every day, while practicing faith, I try hard to always explore Kami’s will in “Nariyuki,” in English, “How we view and incorporate things as they occur in our daily life, and to tenaciously live our life in accordance with Kami’s will.” I was especially moved by Reverend Hiromichi Konko’s sermon given at an occasion when he stated, “Let’s start with a ‘Wagakokoro,’ hearts grateful and caring, in harmony and joy, now and let’s look forward to 10 years from now.” I was so moved by this sermon because whenever someone visits our church in Brazil, for the first time, I always talk to him/her about “The Divine Reminder,” in which Wagakokoro is the essence of the teaching. Some people become so impressed with this concept that they become Konkokyo believers in that instant.

I sincerely hope that the International Gathering is a catalyst to send out to the world this Faith that will enable us to manifest this precious teaching given by the late Reverend Setsutane Konko, our 3rd-generation Konko-Sama, “Together, let us all wholeheartedly pray to renew our Konko Faith, as one big Konko family.”



Reverend Tadashi Miyazaki,
Konko Church of Butanta, Brasil

My wife and I attend the International Gathering every year, to deepen our faith. This was the fourth time we participated. I was particularly touched this time to meet so many Konkokyo believers from around the world, and also because I was able to feel the heartfelt prayers delivered by Konko-Sama for us.

In practicing Konko faith, I like the teaching of “Kami’s blessings begin within hearts grateful and caring, in harmony and joy”. This is a teaching of particular importance to me. I would like to continue to work hard in my daily practice of the faith to achieve a heart that is grateful and caring, in harmony and joy.



Mr. Hooni Kim, Konkokyo of Korea

I was born and raised in a Christian family, but I was never very serious about my faith when I was younger. Mostly, I just went to church because my grandfather went and because I wanted to spend time with him. I remember feeling disconnected from Christianity when I was ten years old and struggling with the death of our family’s dog, who had been with us since before I was born. Being told that my sweet dog, who had loved me for all of my life, was not going to go to Heaven because animals had no souls was not something that made sense to me.

When I was a preteen, I spent a lot of my free time at bookstores, reading whatever I found. This is how I learned about European nature-based faiths. I learned that everything around us, including plants and animals -- not just humans -- had life, and deserved to be respected. This felt comfortable and right to me.



Finding Kami

Jasper Lumadue,
Konko Church of Chicago, U.S.A.

From then on, I did not identify with any specific faith. I knew I believed in what these nature faiths said about all living things, but aside from that, I was unsure of what faith I belonged to. I did not know if I believed in any god (or gods), and I didn’t know if humans inherently had a purpose in life. I was bothered that I did not have any answers to these questions, but at the same time, I also felt like the answers were not available, and that this was the most complete picture of my own spirituality I was going to get.

High school was a very difficult time for me. I ended up dropping out at sixteen. Due to issues with my mental health, I could not regularly attend classes, which in turn made my grades suffer, and I just gave up. After this happened, I where I was rarely able to leave the house. I started to wonder more and more about God, because I felt helpless.

At 18, I met the man I thought I was going to marry.

I genuinely believed that this was going to be the turning point in my life, but I was proven wrong when he became physically and emotionally abusive. This lasted for a year until I was able to get out of the relationship. In the aftermath, I felt even more lost – even broken. The aftereffects of an abusive relationship are difficult to navigate, and I was eventually diagnosed with PTSD.

As I was trying to recover, I spent a lot of time on the internet. This was a way for me to interact with other people and still feel safe. This is how I ended up finding Konkokyo. I met Olivia Kimoto, who at the time was assisting at the Toronto church. She ran a blog detailing her experiences with Shinto and Konkokyo. I was instantly curious, and we became friends. Through Olivia, I met Ashton Kish, a fellow believer who lived only a state away from me. They both encouraged me to connect with Reverend Masanori Takeuchi, head minister of the Konko church of Chicago, even though I was all the way in Kansas. All of this happened quickly, like a chain reaction.

As I learned about Konkokyo, things fell into place. The idea of Kami as a loving, caring parent resonated with me more than the idea of a punishing God ever did. Everything on Earth being a part of Kami as a whole made sense to me; for instance, the idea that an animal has value just like a person. The emphasis on kindness to others really changed my point of view on the world, too, because every time you help another person, you are acting on behalf of Kami.

Since finding Konkokyo, I’ve been to three KCNA conferences and road-tripped to visit the Chicago church for two grand ceremonies. Indeed, these represent is big steps for someone who used to have trouble leaving the house. Konkokyo has been healing for me, and has given me a new way to look at life making it much easier to live.

Change in KIC Directorship

Reverend Shinkichi Kawai retired from the position of the Director of the KIC on December 31. On January 1 Reverend Yumi Asano, the Director of Outreach Department, has taken over the position.

“Research Material on Traces of Konko Daijin” has been published!

Last fall, Konkokyo Research Institute published “Research Material on Traces of Konko Daijin.” This is a collection of several materials including “Konko Daijin Chronological Record” and “Konko Daijin Abbreviated Chronology” discovered in 2015. It contains a photograph of the original and deciphered text. It was written by Konko Daijin and copied by Konko Shijin, the Second Konko-Sama. It is expected to open a new page in exploring Konko Daijin’s living faith. Furthermore, plans are underway to translate this book from Japanese into other languages.



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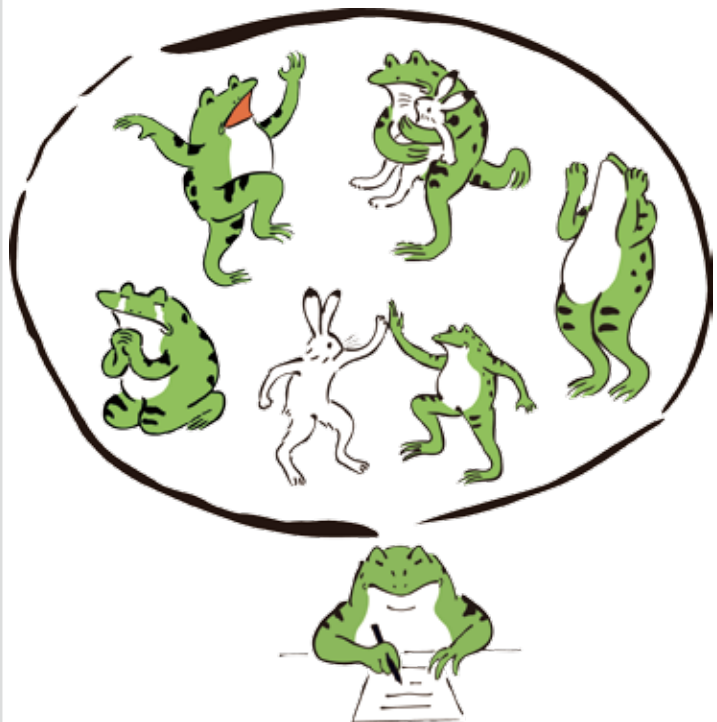
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*Let us write out the blessings
you have received on a piece
of paper.*

A Message from the Staff

Happy New Year, readers! Our founder taught, “Live each day with the same happy heart you have on New Year’s Day. When the sun sets, think that it’s the last day of the year. It will make your life happy every day.” With this teaching in my mind, I would like to keep the awe of welcoming a new year close to my heart. N.K.



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